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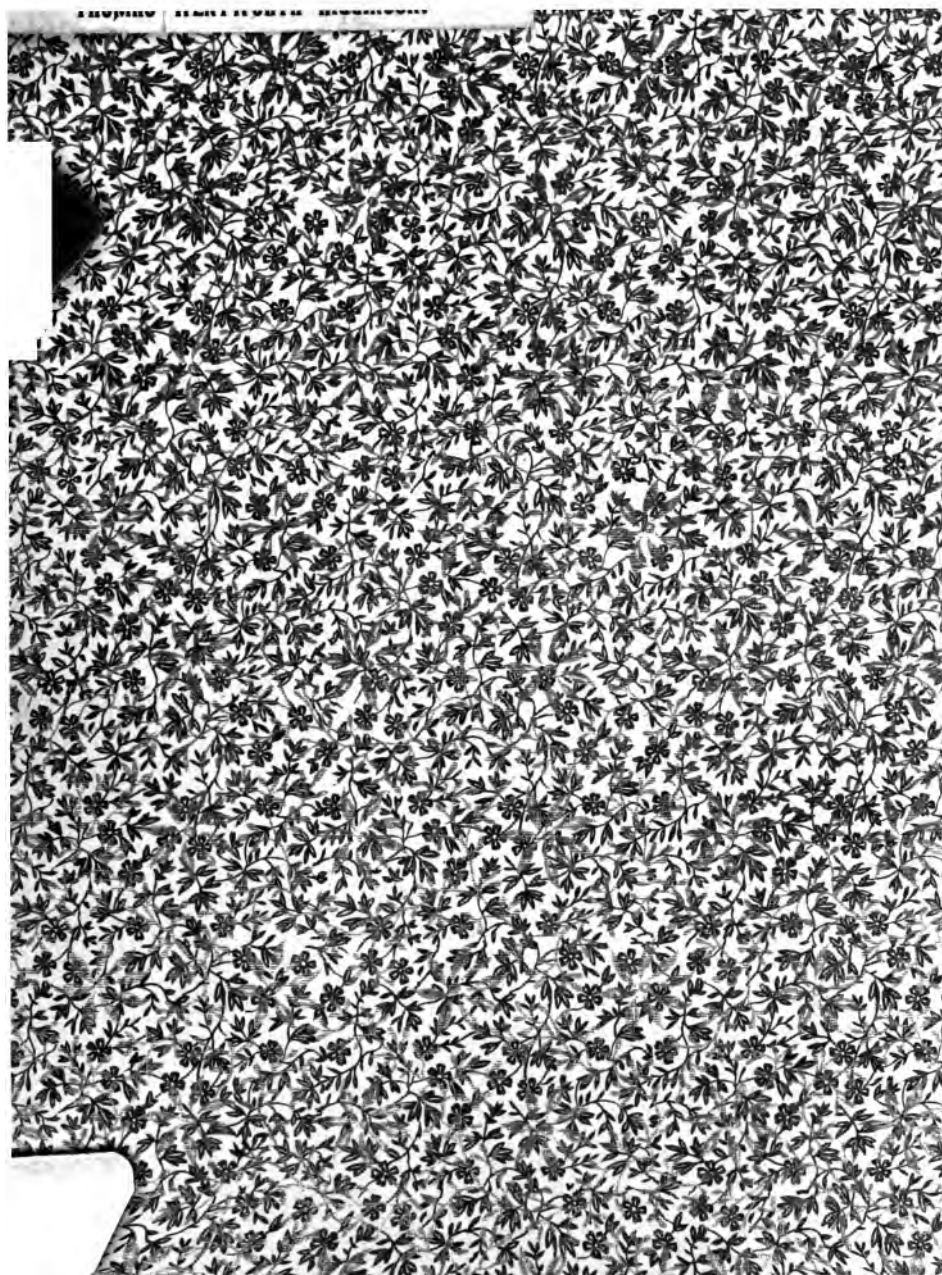
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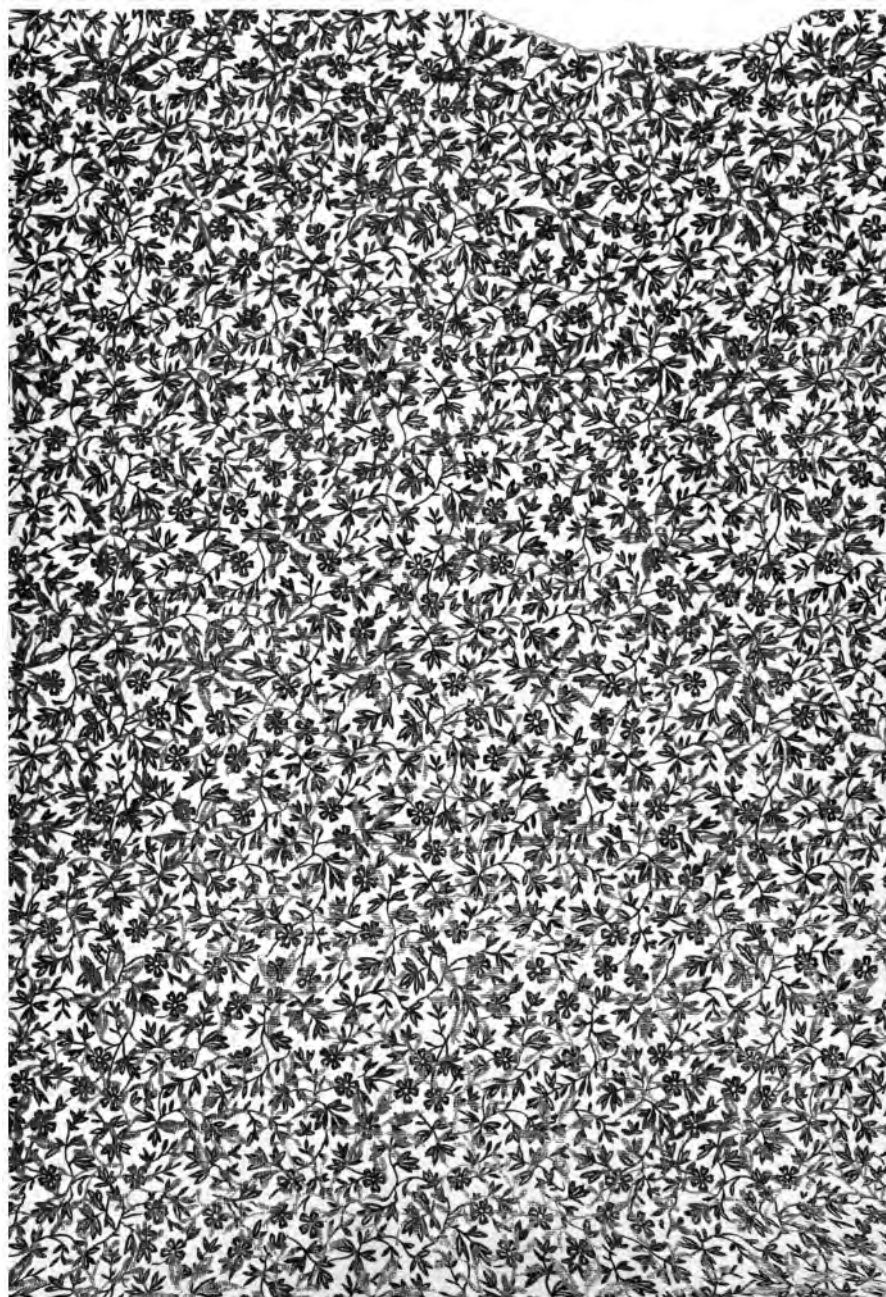
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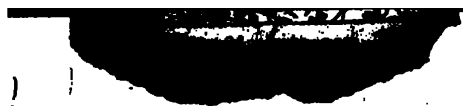
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LETTERS
OF
THEO BROWN







1/1/19, American



Your friend
Theo Broder

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LETTERS

OF

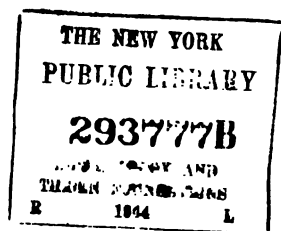
THEO. BROWN

SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY

SARAH THEO. BROWN

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WORCESTER
PUTNAM, DAVIS & CO.
1898



THIRD AND ENLARGED EDITION.

137 M.
instance of 100

PRESS OF
CHAS. HAMILTON,
WORCESTER.

TO
CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN AND
FRIENDS,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.

Little N. September, 1964

LETTERS.

1846.

new

Such a night as this, you have not in your Philadelphia, such a profusion of jewelry and democratic distribution of the same, alike on the mansion and the shanty, and the great full moon so lavish of its light over all, taking no more pains to gild the palace than the hovel; there is no sham in Dame Nature's democracy. There is something in this cold glitter of moonlight on ice, which takes right hold of me, and seems to suggest that this life I am leading is but a shabby apology for a real life; what means this "old discontent," this dissatisfaction we feel with our every day lives; I come out of the store and look up at the stars, and my business seems to contribute, not the least fraction of nutriment for my soul;

but a strain of music comes to my ear, or I come across a bed of frost gems on an autumn morning, or a bed of anemones in spring, or a bundle of sunbeams comes millions of miles to shine through a knot-hole in Charles Allen's fence, and behold how mean our shops, our farms, our lives, in comparison with these little reveries—are these then the only realities? It would seem as though these pursuits which absorb all our powers and hours, should educate us body and soul, but these speculations will lead to the use of more paper, ink and time than I can give, but of course, I *can* clear it all up for you, when I have leisure.

I feel that I am half asleep much of the time, but I occasionally rouse up a little and look over the taffrail of my craft and half realize that something is passing, but the something passes without rubbing against me much and goes out of sight astern and is buried, and the sea sings over it—another chance perhaps sometime, somewhere.

SEEKONK, 1847.

new

Here I am, sitting beside a little pond with inlet at bottom and outlet at top, where I used to play when a boy, and here are turtles, coming up to the surface, the children's children, etc., of those I used to look at with such interest, and wonder how they could live in the water. The frogs are sitting on the margin and ever and anon one jumps at something that may, or may not, serve as provender. I believe they are not always very discriminating! Turtles are standing on stones, their legs bent up over their shells, in apparently a most uncomfortable position, close by me a cat-bird noiselessly hops about, and lots of other birds are coming and going, some to look about, some to get whatever they may find useful to their families—oh how quiet it is here! let revolutions come and go, what are they to the dwellers in this quiet spot,—but I must say good-bye to this dear place, and somehow I feel it must be a long one.

Good-bye quiet sunny pond, but if death does not rob me of memory, I'll visit you again, and I know I shall consider the time well spent.

1847.

new

Do you expect me to defend Emerson? He doesn't try to defend himself, and unfortunately I am unable to do so, or often to give the remotest hint of the meaning of some of his sayings, sometimes when occasion seems to demand that I should. Your letter led me to ask myself if after all it was "sentimental dreaming" as you term it, and if after all I may not soon come to laughing at my former self; possibly, I have laughed at a good many of my former selves. Be that as it may, I have found in Emerson that which makes life richer to me and, although he has not "ciphered out the universe" yet, a sum the celestials may not be able to do, on the blue canopy

above, he makes me contented to go unciphered, and I love everything better, my wife and boy, even cutting coats, I had almost said, as well as other pursuits we call higher.

I hope what you wrote about Carlyle is not true. The fact of his veneration for Robert Burns goes a great way with me to prove its untruth; a good deal of virtuous indignation has been expended upon Burns, which seems likely to be all wasted, for we can't help loving him. It will take a thorough change of heart and one which would fit for some place beside a respectable heaven, to do other than love Burns.

February, 1847.

To J. D.

Those "grave" reflections of yours are rather, cool, John, for a man with such a young blooming wife as your Charlotte, to

be indulging in. But I sometimes have pleasant thoughts of the sleep that is to come—perchance under some little pine, in our cemetery, that may now be practising the dirge that it will sing over me—its faithful shadow daily and nightly in the sun and moonlight crossing my grave, and how comfortable we shall look in the winter packed away with our thick white coverlids, so carefully laid on and well tucked in about us.

But we will hope to wake up in some great morning somewhere, sometime. Shall we remember these mornings here, in that morning, which we fain would hope will break on us bye-and-bye? These questionings are not answered; the curtain hiding the past and future is well fastened down. There are those who think they have vague reminiscences of the place from which they came, but death seems to be the admission fee for entrance to the place to which we are all going, and we get no reliable information concerning it from those who have preceded us. The experience we have had

here, I think, has been a first-rate one, and well worth the moderate price of admission.

April 18th, 1847.

To J. D.

I found a beautiful little bed of arbutus to-day, on the left bank of the canal, in the woods this side of where Burbank's paper-mill used to be. By the way, speaking of those mills, reminds me of a little sobering reverie, that I found myself coming out of, one pleasant day awhile ago, leaning on the railing of a bridge that crosses the canal, in that same village, my eye resting on that pretty sheet of water that turns so gracefully over that old dam. But it turns no mill-wheel now. Where, I asked myself, is the florid-faced, aristocratic, big, little man who was wont to raise such a dust and clatter here? His surroundings—how bright they all look in the past! His always newly

shaven and shining face, the fine black broad-cloth in which he was dressed, the heavy carriage in which he was every seventh day carefully trundled to church, the horses and harnesses, all glittering! It seems as if the sun was partial in shining and took especial care to show off all that belonged to him. But who can write a reverie? The atmosphere in which I thus mused, I cannot put upon paper. You can imagine how 't was there, the old striped mills all gone, and the little water-wheel monotonously babbling of the past, etc. I find these *etc.*'s very useful indeed at times.

October, 1847.

To J. D.

For the last three weeks, I have been so confined, that all these beautiful October days have gone without my getting more from them than what has come to me, through the windows of the store. If they

were to be repeated, I should regret less the loss of these fading autumn days, since nothing of the kind is promised us in the next world ; all the glories there are said to be unfading—the spring eternal. It seems to me, I should like to have an October, with its fringed gentians, dropping leaves, etc., once in awhile. November I should not care so much about. Write me an epitaph, if I should fail of cutting a passage through this mountain of woollens they have been heaping on me of late.

1848.

new

The days are shaded by the death of our dear old Mother. While the sun was setting on Tuesday evening she breathed her last. Her simple trust in God through life has always seemed beautiful to me, and it was a great consolation to us, to see her supported by it, to the last. Oh, how my whole life came before me as I looked upon her face

after death! She never looked so beautiful. How ashamed her face made me of my sins, or rather how it moved me to her virtues.

January 13th, 1851.

To H. G. O. B.

I had an unpleasant dream last night; dreamed of looking in a mirror, and experienced some unpleasant reflections respecting the falling in of my earthly tabernacle. Well, all this and much more, is to be realized in due time—if I live. The time will come, if I live, and live here in Worcester, when I shall have to stop in my walks short of all my favorite old places, and farther along, like other old men, I shall sit down slow and breathe hard after doing so, though I may have only walked in from the garden. All this decaying and falling in of the outward man I can contemplate with some good degree, the common, I sup-

pose of acquiescence, but I have some anxious forebodings respecting the state of my inward man when I come to be old. The thought is not pleasant to me, that I may grow conservative and hard—have no faith—no aspirations—no faith in the possibilities of the soul, of the possibility of that which can be proved to be impossible. I suppose this anxiety which I expend upon the future might be more judiciously laid out on the present. The state of soul I now desire in my old age, or some better state, I may undoubtedly have—but, on certain conditions. The surest way of being alive to-morrow is to live to-day. By living now, we prepare for the future, not only by carrying our life enlarged and made more alive with us into the future, but the reminiscences of our better moments of to-day, may help sustain us in the dark hours, that are thickly enough strewn in the future.

August 1st, 1852.

To J. D.

I took one day in Providence to visit Attleborough. This place had the honor of being my residence from the time I was twelve until I was sixteen years old. I walked from the cars, which I left a little this side of Pawtucket, across lots, nearly all the way, which way was entirely new to me. It was a very interesting walk, following a path that led over the tops of little bare hills. Deep down in a valley, between the hills, was a little pond, nearly covered with coarse lily-pads, among which some cows were standing to keep cool and to keep off the flies. The pads had a seared, blasted look, and the whole scene took on an infernal aspect. I was in Dante's regions, and the cows were some old sinners in disguise (cowards, perhaps), and there they are to be forever, swinging their tails to keep off the flies, which will never cease to bite—devils every one of them.

I went through a place called Robin Hollow, which is only half a mile from the house where I lived, and I think I was never there before. The old man with whom I lived hammered away on the virtue of industry, in the most emphatic way man ever hammered, and the afternoons for play of any kind were very few. My playing in summer evening twilights was generally in the yard, and not much farther away from the door-stone than the kittens. I found but one of the family living, and she was pretty old, forty-three years ago. We plunged right into the past, and while in the midst of it, I was feeling that the present was only useful to drag the past into, some kettle began boiling over, which awakened her to such a lively sense of the present that she quickly dropped me and the past, and went out of the room on a swift trot, to look after the skillet. I was taken into the parlor to see the portraits of her parents. The old man had changed so much that his picture was of no account to me, but that of his wife

brought back her kind old face, and I was glad to see it. In spite of her tea and coffee, which were so strong of water that a little mental process was necessary to distinguish between them—(a simple process—if it was night it was tea, if morning coffee)—and a general corresponding thinness of diet, and a like lack of edge to her conversation, I would go a great way to look into her serene face again and plant a hearty kiss among the soft old wrinkles, and tell her how I appreciate now the unclouded sunshine that shone from her face through those four years of my youth.

One great object I had in visiting this place was to satisfy a yearning I had to see again a meadow, not far from the house, and look into a stream that runs through it, on the side of which I used to make hay and spread swaths, looking as I had opportunity into the cool, deep holes, with their clear, sandy bottoms, over which the fish were poised so still, as if absorbed in intense thought. A strange beauty that stream had

for me in those days, and still has,— a beauty deep down, which I can hardly hint at, in words. And there it all was, the stream running the same way, the same weeds and bushes beside it, the same twittering and chittering of birds in the bushes, and the same wild scream of the bluejay in the high pines, a little distance away—all was going on the same, and looked as young as it did twenty-five years ago. My two companions were talking about the value of the land, etc., and were in a hurry, and gave me but a moment for looking and thinking, else I might have contributed a few drops to the stream of a sorrowfuller sort.

1858.

new

I went to a field of laurel on the west side of the hill, beyond Mr. Hadwen's farm, and there it was, white as snow and about the same temperature. But, the coming home is what I have in mind. It was one of those

gray twilight evenings in which objects have no outline and one of the kind which inspires one with sober cheer, a cheer that seems in the grain, and as I went forward with my laurel on my back, crossing a large field, it came to me that I was looking like the man in the old almanac picture—

O'er mountains and moorlands,
Through sleet and through snow.

1858.

new

Here we are in the afternoon of summer, and the afternoon was preceded by a morning, and that by a spring, and yet during all this time our correspondence has been at a stand-still. The winter melted into spring, the skunk-cabbage came up out of the ground right on the heels of the first cow-slip, followed by all manner of things creeping and flying, all these things of which we have not spoken, and I must confess I have seen less of the seasons of late. Before

spring opened, I thought now I will be up to the occasion and not let any of it slip through my fingers. But things go with such a rush in these latter days, I gave it up until next spring, very soon after the skunk-cabbage opened. I have been out some on Sundays and have had some glimpses of the beauty, things look interesting, but I feel like an ignorant person who finds himself in company above him. But after all what's the use of knowing so much about things? the reveries that possessed me, when I was a boy, while looking into the cool, deep places in the stream that ran through the meadow, where I spread hay, were not born of profound knowledge, for there were many subjects which I had not *then exhausted*, yet those reveries seem to me as valuable as those of later years.

July 16th, 1861.

To H. G. O. B.

In a letter which I think you did not receive, I was somewhat eloquent concerning

a large field of daisies on the slope of the farthest hill we can see in the west from William street. It has been an inspiring object to me, this summer. The field is quite extensive, and though it is one, looks like two fields, from here,—two great plateaus away off there, under the sun. The silent grandeur they impart to the neighboring barn is very impressive to me. I have never seen, or shall see, anything in the way of landscape painting that will begin with my daisy field. How the views one occasionally gets of this kind of the actual thing, cheapens the best imitations. At least so it seems to me now, and so I have said it. I presume Ruskin could make me look like a fool to the world, at least, and perhaps to myself; but, with my present ignorance of the world of art, it seems to me as though my daisy field would hold out against his talk awhile, at least. He would probably try to show me that what I saw in my field was in its *small way*, what I should see if I were up to it, in all true works of art. Perhaps

I should, but it is difficult for me to believe it. Ruskin is somewhat fastidious in his estimate of artists, I believe, confines his admiration pretty exclusively to Turner, and yet if each one of all, or a half of Turner's pictures has been as much to him as some actual scenes I have hung up in my mind, are to me, I don't wonder at his much talk about Turner. I went to this field of daisies a fortnight ago. The sweetbriar is abundant on that slope, and it was at its best, and that is good enough. I had something to say about summer in that letter referred to, which you did not get. We were in it then—right in the bloom of it, and I felt it for a few days in a delightful way, in all its opulence of beauty and sweetness. The delights of spring made up chiefly of budding crocuses and snow-drops, and a few scattering notes of the bluebird, seemed a little thin and chilly.

August 7th, 1862.

To J. D.

I have been spending some pleasant hours during the past week, in Arcadia—transported thither on the tones of a flute, played by some Yankee boy no doubt, in the neighborhood, but it came to my ear, while working at my cutting-board, from the serene heights of Arcadia, and from the pipe of some simple shepherd swain, whose sheep were feeding on a gentle slope below him, all bathed in the sunlight of that azure realm. The playing was simple, rather weak perhaps, but just right for the effect, and it floated into the store, amid the thousand sounds that make up the din of the street, but the serenity of my shepherd boy was not disturbed by the din, but on the contrary was rather enhanced thereby. “Little boy blue,” must, I think, be a neighbor of his. I have a great admiration for him. The purity of the little fellow, as I see him relieved against that permanent

azure in which he has established himself in my mind, is suggested to me by remembering the pieces of snow-crust you threw up against the sky, in one of those winters a long while ago, on the old Boston turnpike. Do you remember? Is it possible that you and I are still living and the same fellows? What wandering Jews we are—all but the Jews! Is it not possible that we have got snagged on these shores of Time, and shall never get off?

LYNN, *August 23d, 1863.*

To H. G. O. B.

The day is a good one—as good as I want, thus far at least. It is true it is morning yet, and we can't always tell what a half-day may bring forth. I enjoy being by the sea again very much, but how different the feeling inspired by it, from the inspiration of the mountains. As I stood

by it yesterday, I was reminded of looking through the large end of a spy-glass. It dwarfed all my petty private griefs and follies, sort of hushed up all my sins in its great roar, and was very soothing to me. It might do a very different thing at another time, when my mood was different, though I suspect the sea is too large for my moods, and would break them down, or rather drown them. As we sat last evening out-of-doors, during the silence our thoughts seemed carried away as 'twere by the undertow of the sea, and it made our small-talk seem good, though our words were trivial enough, floating only on the surface. I fancied we felt the depth underneath us of this sea, on which we are—playing, if not sailing, and our chatting seemed to me chastened thereby, and made as good, perhaps, as sacred. I think with the material, this note should have been better, but you know about how I would do it, if I could, and you know also, that that is just about the way I *can't* do it.

I remember a morning at York; the house stood high and commanded a wide look-off, and my window framed a strip of sky and sea and earth, which I could see while lying on my bed; and if I could fitly describe what was done in this little segment of mine between the early dawn and the perfected day, one morning, it would be pleasant reading. But I can only hint of some of the varied and many-colored splendors. First, a chaotic jumble of sea and sky, mist and fog, neither for a while distinguishable from the others, through which Boon Island light, nine miles away, struggled feebly (this seems too much like a composition but we must go on, now); after awhile I could just discern a faint light on the lower part of this mass, and a little motion, then the faintest tinge of violet, changing to crimson. Spectral sails make their appearance, and move slowly athwart the scene. The splendors heighten and my strip of earth is illuminated and made the most intense emerald and beautiful beyond

anybody's description ; and so the thing goes on, the splendors still heightening with much moving of cloud-racks until finally the sun emerges and rests his chin on a crimson liquid orient. And it is day and my strip of glorified earth has become a sheep pasture, gnawed to the bone by the poor sheep. And the landlord appears with pails of water and says, "the morning begun rather foggy, but I guess it is going to be a pleasant day."

October 29th, 1864.

To J. D.

I don't know whether Bannister is still among the living. I mean to go to the mill bye-and-bye, when the bobolinks get there and the pitcher plant is in flower. I suppose vague yearnings are beginning to stir in some of those birds, who are now stuffing themselves with rice in the South, for that meadow. It is pleasant to think of their

songs mingling with the rumble and clatter of that unworldly mill, which runs to poetry, principally I should say, or rather painting. I presume the miller thinks he is the only one who tends it, but how lovingly the heavens embrace it, as it sits in the motherly lap of Dame Nature. All the lovely sights and sounds are made for it, for it the birds and insects sing and buzz and hum and whirr, and for it the cloud shadows are blown across that little meadow, and the flowers are blown in it, and with what an impressive silence it stands amid all this beauty as if filled with a great peace, more than that, with ecstasy.

It looks to me as though it felt itself in loving hands *always*, in spite of all that's said about the pitiless peltings of storms.

1867.

Our business is very light these days—we have just set up a new kitten or rather kitlet in the store; she is a pretty little

new

thing, a stranger among strangers, with an outfit of a cheap cotton string 'round her neck, with no milk or meat or no means of getting any, that she knows of and yet easily beguiled into playing with anything that offers, the great responsibilities of cathood have not dawned upon her as yet, the anxieties of litters of kittens, the awful fits that may fling her on all sides of the room at the same instant, all these things a wise Providence hides from her and she plays with as little thought of the morrow as the lilies which neither toil or spin.—It is early enough to think of the evils when they come.

September 5th, 1867.

To H. G. O. B.

I am in Lynn, bodily, at least, but I have been reading Dante's *Inferno*, or a few Cantos of it, and what with Longfellow's notes and the fact of its having been so much

as I hear it has been, and for aught I know still is, to Longfellow, I have been much interested in it, and the two days past have been much colored by it. My interest is in the accessories rather than in the work itself. But while walking on the road to Salem this morning, the golden-rods, milk-weeds and all the dear old things which go with them, which bordered the road, soon set me contrasting this world that Longfellow had been living in, with Thoreau's and Thoreau's poke-weed, bending over with its rich burden seemed more juicely and healthily interesting, than Dante's dried phantoms, bobbing up and down, or blown about hither and thither forever. I am suspicious that it is the forever or *almost* forever which pertains to these ghosts, which makes their doings poetic or dramatic or both.

September 12th, 1867.

To L. P. H.

Another mile-stone, in my life's journey, I am passing to-day — the fifty-sixth.

Celebrated it by walking to a hill beyond Auburn, where I went the day I was fifty-one. I went in the afternoon, and it was a pretty afternoonish afternoon with me. When coming down, I noticed my shadow stretched out very long. Pleasant to me was the thought that it "pointed towards the morning." The golden-rods bordered my walk nearly all the way, and were a great delight to me. I brought home my hands full of them, and purple and white asters. I wish I could send them to you. You are entitled to them, for your love for these things enhances their value for me. Where are you to-night? Does this beautiful moonlight, that shines here to-night, gild the sea through which you are hurrying? How strange to think of the speck your craft is, away off in the moonlight on the boundless ocean, and that you and Susie are in it, with strangers! I hope you are having a prosperous voyage. It does seem as if the sea might be quiet and behave itself while you are going over.

You look to my mind's eye, as I see you now, away off on the horizon, in the moonlight, as though nothing could happen to you. If pictures could only be photographed from the imagination, I should go immediately and sit for you. It seems strange to have only little things of which to write to you, so far away, but I have no large ones. I don't believe you will find anything so absorbingly interesting to you, in that foreign land, but you could stop with pleasure to read a letter, about even the poorest of our old picnic places, if it only half did justice to it. I doubt not you will find many interesting things off there, but they won't bear comparison, of course, with our *Heron* at Long Pond, including surroundings. And then that jingling, icy morning on Millstone Hill! Lapse of time does not diminish, but rather increases, the glory of that morning. You must come back in season for next summer's picnics, even if you do a little less of the Nile, or leave out a pyramid or two. By way of speculation why not bring home

one of the smaller pyramids, and exhibit on Boston Common? I think with the aid of a band of music the thing would have quite a run.

1868.

new

Ten or fifteen years are as many as I count upon. Time has dealt as gently with me, as with most, I think; once I had too many gray hairs, but I haven't now, on the contrary, rather too few! I see the sun rise less often than I used to, and I fear think less of the day it makes, after it has risen, and I look forward, with a little less anticipation to the spring; but I remember one or two sunrises and a spring in which the life tide or sap that floods everything, found its way and crept up into the little private rill that fed me, and entranced me with the ever new wonder and delight.

1869.

new

Your despairing note found me in quite a different mood from that in which yours was written, but for a time it somewhat changed my own, and I found myself entertaining the same questionings, that was yesterday; to-day the idea of speculating whether a beneficent or a malignant power has control over the universe seems ridiculous, but if I should bring to bear the best arguments or reasons for the faith that is in me, the best I mean to address to your intellect, I fear they would but confirm you in your despair. It looks dark to me ahead sometimes, but perhaps we are traversing a desolate region of life's journey, but it would not be a journey without deserts and desolation; let us not doubt but we shall yet find an outlet into fairer regions; the impossibility of imagining how the thing is to be done, is of course, necessary to give depth to the desolation; I usually feel in sympathy with these lines of Thoreau's:

“ I will not doubt the love untold
Which not my worth or want have bought,
Which wooed me young and wooes me old,
And to this evening hath me brought.”

The loss of our darling baby has awakened no distrust of this love in either of us ; she was a charming little creature and had identified herself with our lives so completely, that everything speaks to us continually of her now ! It was a great thing to have her with us so long and her going even enhanced and deepened the beauty of the summer days in which she was withdrawing from us, and made them in the best way memorable. It is my heart's persuasion that such intelligence, beauty and sweetness cannot be lost, to what purpose else does the universe stand ? Don't imagine God's ways can't be vindicated, because I don't know how to do it, but I do believe the world is going well for all concerned.

*1869.**new*

I wish I had "new thoughts and surer hopes" to tell you of. I have moments, from time to time, in which life seems very rich, and I thank God, I have arrived on the shores of being, in spite of the occasional feeling I have that my life is a failure. But probably the case is not so bad as it seems. If we could only make our lives more tragic, if tragic they must be, and not this half tragic, half comic. "If," as Thoreau says, "we can't sing of faith and hope let us sing of our despair." Be so in earnest in besieging the citadel of God that our failure can be charged to fate; there would be something respectable in that.

June 14th, 1869.

To J. D.

I have been walking on the Grafton road. The same old things are being done over again that we have seen together so

many times. There has been a shower this afternoon, which brings out much fragrance, especially that of the vernal grass. The bobolink, a trifle subdued, perhaps, still holds forth with vivacity. This is the time of day for the robin, especially after a shower, and he is at it. I heard a lark also. You translated his song for me once. The grass is about ready for the scythe; buttercups and daises, and all the pretty things that go with them, are at their best now. How little I have seen of these things this spring, some of which are already going to seed. There is a gentle reproof in their faces, I fancy, as they look into mine, that is a little saddening to me, but they look in good spirits, tossing their blossoms in a pleasant breeze.

August 1st, 1869.

To H. G. O. B.

These are great summer days. They stir in me the migratory blood. I feel like

walking away off, over the edge of the world. If you were here I should be after you and propose going southwest in spite of all the Brookfields we should have to go through. I am well nigh smothered with the glories heaped upon me in such large profusion. Who is sufficient for these things? The few drops I get of this great draught held to my lips, are so petty in comparison with that which spills over, that it all seems wasted on me.

I walked awhile on the Providence railroad this morning; left it this side of Quinsigamond village, and went over the hill on the left, sat on the top and read some in Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which I have tried several times before with small success. I was much more interested in the golden-rods by the side of the railroad, which are just opening now, and the milk-weeds, clematis, sumach and poke-weed, of which I saw some fine specimens,—the berries are green yet. These flowers and berries are worth more to me than the words and leaves

of Wordsworth. I fancied while reading that all the *words worth* reading, in the Excursion, in such a day and place, might have been compressed into a smaller volume. The play on the name did not enter my head until just before I wrote it.

November 19th, 1869.

To H. G. O. B.

I have been walking to-day over the Charlton road, which goes up through the woods up into the sky. I left the road when I got to the top, and climbed another hill, a little to the right, from which I had a fine view. This last hill I think we visited together once. It seems to me it was late in the afternoon, in the twilight, when we reached there. There was a mysterious arrangement of rocks, which we found on our way up, which must have been made a long time ago, and that reminded me, and

perhaps you, of Stonehenge. It is possible the association of twilight with the place is in consequence of the dark thoughts suggested by Stonehenge and the Druids. From there, I struck off east, into a road that led me off by the little house of the English Chartist, whom you and I visited once. There was the same utter lack of anything done for ornament as when we were there. I saw four bluejays in the edge of the woods. At the bottom of the hill, just beyond the dilapidated old house, an old milk-can swings in the wind, hung to the well-sweep belonging to the old house. This put on the finishing touch for shiftlessness, and set me thinking of my own. But seeing the bluejays soon after, I was comforted with the thought that though my farm if I had one might run down, I should still have a little stock in the bluejays. This bluejay and wild goose and chickadee, etc., stock, though it is safe we hope, is yet very variable. There are times, lots of them, when we can't seem to realize much from them.

I get dividends but seldom, these days. Still I believe in that kind of stock. I feel as though my property in the wild geese was less likely to take to itself wings and fly away than that in my house and store. But I am afraid it may be possible to run out these upland farms as well as the lowland ones.

December 30th, 1869.

To E. H. R.

I have been hearing the same tune in the streets to-day, and from the same hand-organ, I think, that we heard together one day nearly opposite Kettell's hat store. Do you remember? There is immense quantity of tone to the instrument, and the first strain of this particular tune is enough to lift all Main street into another world,—a world, Oh! how far away from Kettell's hat store! I wonder if we shall ever spend much time

in that world? Ever get *settled* there? Any peep we chance to get into it from this, is very unsettling to things in this. I have more than once looked about after hearing this tune to see if the people in the street were going to keep on, and do their errands and return to their stores and homes again.

January 6th, 1870.

To H. G. O. B.

I am sorry to have to inform you of the death of our friend, Edward Hamilton. His death comes very near to me ; I admired him long before I became acquainted with him. My life in Worcester seems infinitely long when I think of it, with reference to him. He sat centuries in our store, beginning with the one down street, with his violin in his hands, and some century or two since the violin was laid aside. How tenderly he treated me, through those years of my youth, and of my intensest greenness, rubbing it off

occasionally a little, but in such a delicate way that it did not hurt. His funeral was at the Church of the Unity, and two of his compositions were sung, one of which seemed to me great, among a few of the great things in that line. The music is set to the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd." The bass solo, "When I walk through the valley and shadow of death," is very fine. I wish I could tell him I never heard anything better of the kind, and I wish also I could tell him how deeply his death is felt, and by how many, for he was much depressed during his sickness, and thought he had few friends. "If a man die," shall we see him again?

August 1st, 1870.

To H. G. O. B.

Can't you drop one or two countries out of your programme and come home sooner? Will not the war there shorten your stay?

I hope you will not get so much interested as to enlist. I don't believe you will; you learned in our war how *not* to enlist. If *I* had been as young as *you*, what do you think would have kept *me* back? There is a good deal of your journeying in this letter from Dresden. There is a good deal of *you* in the letter, which is more interesting to me than the places and things you write of. I can however, see with what silent veneration I should stand with you at Tasso's tombstone, but I have no recollection of any line of his writing that I ever read, if indeed I ever read any. I don't recollect of *your* ever having quoted him to me, very often, —not half so often as Thoreau. Suppose you drop the past now and look at the present. Do not be driven by that merciless sense of duty which rides all travelers, but walk about there at your ease, and original man, gracefully condescending, when it comes in *your way*, to attend to the trivial history that has been enacted there. That's the way to travel through a country. Such traveling

9

as that, would bury those old graves, thus saving us the trouble of hunting up the hole, or where the hole *was*, in which Tasso was never put. Still I would walk with you some ways to see Tasso's tomb this morning. The blackberry vines growing about it, the subdued chirp of the crickets, enhancing the silence, the subdued sunlight over all, and *you* would make the place seem very attractive to me. All this, on the supposition that there is a pretended, at least, tomb of Tasso, though for the use I have been making of him, it is of small consequence whether there is any tomb, or indeed, whether there was any Tasso.

February 16th, 1870.

To E. B. L.

The great yellow moon has just risen. On opening our front door just now, it looked me full in the face, and into a thoughtful mood. What a reminder it is,

of our higher, our infinite relations. What gentle reproof of any meanness, or worldliness there may be in us, in its open look. How like to that of music. And what a miracle it is! Away across hundreds of thousands of miles of space comes this golden light, and gilds not only our own and our neighbor's houses and fences, but one side of our planet. Think of the thousand miles of wild lonely sea coast, flashing with the golden light, all through the night. Some inch or two of snow fell last night, after it had been raining, and the trees look like great white corals. Looking at them from our window against the blue sky, Alice the while playing on the piano something quite inspiring to me, "set me up" some, and I walked down to the store to the high measure of the music, and the faces in the street looked to me as though the music and beauty had reached them too, and my "how fare ye?" as I passed them, had a little more depth than I had been wont to put into it.

September 5th, 1870.

To J. D.

Here I am, under a chestnut tree by the side of North Pond, a beautiful blue sky over me with heavy clouds full of light. A kingfisher had just circled round me, ambitious of being mentioned in this note, perhaps. The pond is so low that I have just walked across a part of its bed. There are some interesting roots of large trees, completely uprooted, it is very strange to me how, as there is so little current, if any. Thistledown shining in the sunlight is sailing by me. Indeed, a great deal is going on, in a thistle close by; a splendid butterfly has been steadily piercing with his long proboscis, into the heart of the flower, nearly an hour, bumble-bees shoot in like bullets close by him, but there is no quarreling. They work as though they were in a great hurry. I left the butterfly working on the thistle when I came away.

1871.

new

This was a bright morning, with a high sounding wind to it; and inspired by the light and sound, I started for a long walk, out to Daniel Heywood's, beyond the Poor Farm. I wanted to talk with him about poor old Watch, whose declining days he smoothed with such tender care, ministering to his wants and comfort in his later years, his years of obesity and rheumatism, while lying on the door-stone and looking off with bleared eyes over the pleasant meadows, and dreaming of game, which, anchored as he was by rheumatism, he could no longer follow except in dreams. In due time, after the final wag of that tail which in all its vibrations had been such a faithful indicator of the feelings of its possessor, he was carefully buried in a pleasant spot, laid in his sandy grave by loving hands; he earned human sympathy, and it is pleasant to know he had it. I hope Watch is immortal and that I shall see him again, for

I want him to know that my jumping upon him one day in crossing the street was accidental, for I came near breaking his back ; he undoubtedly thought I meant to do it, and for a long time would have nothing to do with me ; if I see him again, I will try and clear that matter up with him ; if I should find him with a spiritual body, I wonder whether his spiritual tail will be modeled after his original tail, or after the honest but somewhat ungraceful stump he so vigorously wagged the greater part of his earthly life ! I suspect, however, we shall have to wait awhile before we can know ; with all the table tippings, I still doubt if there are any tell-tales on the other side, so whether he will be cur-tailed or re-tailed there, we can only guess at now, but I believe he may feel sure it will be well with him for his faithfulness will surely not go unrewarded.

May 12th, 1871.

To H. G. O. B.

The beauty is piled thickly about us these days. The chance glimpses I have had of it, from our east chamber window, these last few mornings over the pear trees, filled with blossoms and birds' songs, and sparkling dew, are rather inspiring. Is not *this* the most valuable as well as the finest crop the trees can yield, even if *every* blossom should culminate in a pear? And is this, or is it *not*, a consoling reflection to a man edging on close to sixty, who as yet shows scanty sign of fruit. But I am too young yet to be good for anything, according to somebody's (whose?) opinion you were telling me about. I wonder what I shall be good for when I am old enough. *A funeral* did I hear you think? Well, that is something. But to make a first-rate funeral,—to make one's self felt in a good deep way in his *death*,—it seems necessary he should have been good for something in his life.

1872.

new

A light snow fell last night. The hills of the Tataasset range look interesting, but I have lighted a cigar and I suspect the three little springs high up on said hill and the berries of the wild rose will have to get along without me, as they can. Those berries, by the way, have a great charm for me, heightened by the fact, that they are of no use but to look at; the color and warmth they contribute to the places where they grow, you have noticed. The shine of these berries in a cold winter's sun, with the note of the chickadee, I recollect to have seen and heard on the side of that hill many years ago, but I can't *tell* much about it.

January 7th, 1872.

To E. H. R.

I have just been lifted up by listening to one of Beethoven's great compositions—

Adelaide—oh! what a beautiful thing it is, and if ears continue to be constructed like ours, it must be a “joy forever.” How vividly it brings back the days of my youth and those of the beautiful youth of my friend, Samuel Jennison, who lived for years in these great compositions, and played them for me, better than any one. With what a mild lustre shine out some of those beautiful spring days spent with him and his music.

SUNDAY, *June 30th*, 1872.

To J. D.

new

The weather is too hot to think of walking, and the next best thing is reading in Thoreau's journal, the corresponding dates of the year eighteen fifty-four. It is full of observation, mostly of birds and flowers. It keeps me posted, as to what is going on, and it is pleasant to know what is doing, if

we don't see it. That the *pontideria*,^e for instance, is now in flower, and that the blue dragon-flies are darting among the blue spikes, making a "gala-day" of every one of these days. And below the water surface there are the pickerel as still as the dragon-fly when he is not darting.

You will be sorry to hear the trees are being cut down about the old Hermitage. It looks as though there was to be thorough work made in cutting away these woods. As I walked there the other day, I fell to thinking of other days, of a little bed of wind flowers we once saw there, shivering in a chilly evening, near by where the cutting is now going on, and I felt rather old during the rest of that walk, and the thing is to grow worse and worse, up to a certain point. It is consoling to think that this matter of old age is not chronic, and that after a certain crisis, we may come out as young as any of them.

I have been lately reading a little of a German Philosopher, a pessimist, who thinks

the world is as bad as it can be; that we couldn't exist if things were any worse.

Did this philosopher ever have a morning with apple-blossoms and bobolinks? It seems to me in his path he must have had some trying mornings of that sort. If I could have had him at Bannister's mill when the pitcher-plant was in flower and other flowers which grow with them there. A morning with swift moving clouds, filled with light, flecking that little meadow with their shadows; the breeze fragrant with vernal grass, the sound of the water-fall, the note of the bluejay, etc., etc., what a miserable time he would have had of it,—that is if he had consented to let up in the rigor of his philosophy.

July 7th, 1872.

new

To H. G. O. B.

I expect to go with you next Saturday to Chester. I am sorry the time for going

is postponed, for the bloom of summer is losing its freshness every day. Still, this is midsummer, and in spite of the slight sense of repletion in its luxuriance—its honeyed sweetness gives, I like it. It is the birth-time of a world of moths, and millers, and insects of all sorts; a time when Puck and his tribe (of which I know but little, but I know something of the feeling which gave them birth) hold high carnival. It has been too hot to walk much, and indeed, I have not had much opportunity. I have kept myself posted a little as to what is doing by reading Thoreau's journal. I see that the clover heads have begun to brown, or did eighteen years ago at this date, and I have not had a sniff from a clover field this year. Speaking of "upland farms," this is getting to be about the season in our lives, when we ought to be sending down from them great wagon-loads of produce, piled so high that the wagons would creak and groan under them, and I doubt not you are doing so, but I have never worked a day on that farm. I

have done a little fancy gardening, but in such a slovenly way, that it has all run to weeds and yields nothing. For me to make any allusion to having a garden, much more a farm, is a joke, but too serious an one to be funny. *Sometimes* it seems to me the case may not be so forlorn as I have pictured it.

September 13th, 1872.

To E. B. L.

Another mile-stone passed. Sixty-one times three hundred and sixty-five days! The event was celebrated last evening at our house with flowers, a birthday cake and a little in the way of literature by Albert and Will. My presents were flowers. One splendid great two-story bouquet made principally of wild flowers, golden-rod, purple and white asters and clematis. It is magnificent, and the house is full of smaller bouquets, flowers and smiles—smiles full of

new

tenderness, and slight mention of the precise number of years the day brought round.

|| We thought of sixty-one, and talked of other things. It is all well enough to have birthdays in early life, but after sixty, I
| think the thing might about as well be hushed up. If one had made the best possible use of the sixty years, and so made them seem short for the immense burden of golden fruit he was bending under, then the case would be——different. Well, perhaps there is some way of making that which seems sometimes to us utter failure, a sort of success. The great disadvantage we humans labor under, is beginning life young, without experience. If we could only begin at the other end——begin at seventy, and live the other way, how beautifully we could have lived, and what babies we should have ended with. But nature didn't arrange it so, perhaps couldn't, and so we begin doing everything we ought not to do too much, and everything we ought to do, too little, until we find we have made a botch of what

might have been a success, if we had not been born so young!

December 1st, 1873.

To ———

Alice has been playing a composition of Hummel's which I like very much; very grand and inspiring it is. Passages in some of these great compositions, seldom fail to lift me from a low mood, and often instantly change what was a moment before an opaque, muddy tumble-bug's ball, on which we were crawling, into a shining sphere, bathed in light, cushioned in air and whirling off with us amid the stars.

January 24th, 1873.

To M. G.

"And old men shall dream dreams."

One might ask, naturally, what else should they dream? But my object in writing the

above, was not to find fault with it, but by way of preface to something I thought of trying to say about mine last night. How different this cold, drifting snow-storm into which I awoke this morning, from the luxuriant summer grasses and flowers I had been wading through in my dream. It was one of those dreams in which everything is sublimed, especially vegetation. So enhanced is the beauty of everything, that a real rose is no match for the meanest weed, and the delicious golden light makes the common sun-light a cheap affair. The child-like innocence in which I live, move and have my being, in all this beauty and grandeur, is pleasant to remember. The dream I had of you standing at the well, was of the same character. No picture in the world, it seems to me, would be half as much to me as is this one of you (and how distinctly I see you now) standing by that well. The charm, however, was not all centered in you, though you were the central figure; but the whole scenery of the dream partook of it. No

bloodless angel you, as you stood there, but real flesh and blood, full of ruddy health, and such rich, warm color. The background, the eastern horizon a little after dawn, was not too brilliant for you. You have such dreams and could tell them. Why don't you? For awhile after one of them everything else seems comparatively uninteresting.

November 16th, 1873.

To J. D.

How different this world looks on different days. Under this stainless blue sky, a large tract of which I can see from the window at which I am sitting, writing and at the same time listening to Alice playing one of Beethoven's Sonatas, the world seems about as interesting a world as one could reasonably ask for.

I walked with Harry the other day some four miles on the Holden road, to

attend the funeral of Adams Foster. He was a remarkable man, who *really possessed* many virtues, about which so many are always talking. Even with all the light of this nineteenth century, gospel or other, any *one* virtue is enough, to adorn and make conspicuous any man. One very noticeable in him was a great content, which seemed too deep to be disturbed. He came into the store a few weeks ago, and said with a pleasant smile as he took a chair, "I thought I should like to see you again. I don't expect to make many more calls on my friends. I shall leave this world very soon. I don't *know* that I am going anywhere else. I have no fault to find if this is to be the last of me. Life has been a great satisfaction." This and more of the like said by him, and his life behind it, was impressive to me, and will make his call a very memorable one.

1873.

new

In the dearth of business that has just set in I see no reason why I should not

begin a sort of diary letter to you, putting into it from day to day such little things as I pick up in the street or in my mind or reading and would think of sufficient interest to record. Such a diary may seem to show the poverty of the life I am leading, but you will please notice I propose to speak only of the *little* things, only the chips, so to speak, which float on the great current of my life and give little hint of the depth and richness within. But seriously I would fain hope that my life may not be so poor and barren as it often seems to me; the ground of this hope is in the fact that God may bring about something like a success when to me failure sometimes seems inevitable.

1874.

new

This is a day when I feel like subscribing to this sentence of Emerson's: "Give me health and a day and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous." But I cannot tell you much about this brimming

hour of the year, for I have been too busy to go out, to see it much ; to write about *this* spring, I should have to pump up from an old spring, possibly the one we drank from years ago where we saw the cowslips. We have laid up such a stock of springs, that we can tap and draw from at pleasure, that there seems less reason for our giving heed to those that are passing ; I wouldn't have you think I *believe* what I have just said ; possibly, however, this is as it should be, the dew of youth is getting off, there is less bread to the wine, the sparkle is less dazzling, if not a little dimmed. Perhaps we have got seasoned, these fifty or sixty summers, winters and springs, are they not all safely packed away in us ! Compared with that spring eternal in our minds, what are these muddy enervating springs of these later years ! What is this Boylston out here seven miles north, compared with the old Boylston of your boyhood ! You see I am trying to say something comforting to us old fellows.

1874.

new

Why are we so silent, when so much is a doing? The spring has sprung, trees blossoming and unfolding their leaves, birds singing, and the roll of the toad is heard in the land, or rather the water; this morning I heard the chip-bird, the kind I call the cricket-bird, its note is so much like that of the cricket, in which there is a great deal of summer. This morning I saw a robin visit an old nest on one of our pear trees, whether with the idea of repairing it, or thinking he could make use of some of the old timber in building a new one, I do not know; but as the nest is in a good state of preservation I should think any robin, with half an eye to economy, would consider a new lining only necessary.

I am spending these great days in a new store in an atmosphere of paint and varnish, with my head filled with the petty cares of business—a good part of one of these spring days has been spent in getting

up a pattern of a morning coat for —— to attitudinize while playing croquet; the end to be sure to be arrived at is great, so too are the means; the conception to begin with, then the labor and pains of birth,—but perhaps the great thing is the coat, if so be the coat is a greatcoat. This machine of a universe is a pretty large and complicated one, in which there are lots of private springs and back actions, side ditto, some of which operate in strange ways.

new

1874.

I walked this morning to Newton's hill, the north side of which is covered with butter-cups and daisies. How beautiful they are sprinkled in with clover and other things which grow with them, the bobolink spilling his liquid songs over them—he is however beginning to lose the brightness of his plumage and there is a little falling off in the exuberance of his first arrival—later his

plumage becomes a dirty yellowish white and his voice changes to a squawk and finally ceases and he sulks dirty and ragged, until the time comes for him to leave. What a fall was there and from what a spring!

April 6th, 1874.

To H. G. O. B.

I walked down to "Old Flagg's," in one of the cold, raw afternoons, we had a plenty of, last week. It had been a long time since I had walked over that ground, and my mind naturally turned on days gone by, and selected a particular morning, which made a pretty strong contrast to said afternoon. A morning when there was a good deal of youth in me, in which I recollect holding up a water-lily against the just risen sun, with the glittering drops raining from it. That was a great morning, which made this afternoon and Old Flagg and Old

Brown look a little dull and slow—and seeing Old Flagg didn't help the matter much. Has he duly "considered the lilies," and was he too much for them? Perhaps they haven't been wasted on him,—we don't know what he would have been without them. He might suggest, if he should see this letter, that I should aim my sarcasm at one nearer home.

1875.

new

We have found a new proof of the Pessimistic philosophy, in the fact that when an article is plenty, that is the time when it will bring next to nothing in the market—you can only sell things when you haven't got them to sell. There are the hens, they furnish a strong proof of this statement; whenever there is a scarcity of eggs, they are sure to find it out, and stop laying. If Nature were anything but a Pessimist she would see to it that eggs were plenty, when hens refused to lay. I have left Stanley.

Didn't get quite through with him to the Atlantic Ocean, but followed him through all the fightings with the cannibals. There is no getting on the right side of those fellows, except you get on the inside of them.

How beyond our control this really having a good time is! We make preparations of all kinds, with books, sweetmeats, preachings and prayings, but how often we go home tired and famishing! after all the good spirits meet us, perhaps in a reverie, or while exchanging a few words with a neighbor over a fence, and the place and the moments are made memorable and constrain us to better living.

1875.

new

I have been waited on by a Life Insurance Agent, who has labored to make it clear to me that I must invest in a little game, in which I must die to win. I felt

too lively on his first visit and did not see the Policy of it. But these fellows never let go, and I felt more and more obituary with each recurrence of agent—queer name! I should say a man was *no gent*, who obtrudes one's grave-stone continually. At length one day I succumbed, and now my family have no longer interest in keeping me alive.

And so you have had a cold, but I doubt if it has been equal to my cold. Mine was so large as to be interesting to *me*, at least. It lasted three almost immortal days—I went into the fields with mine, on Saturday afternoon, and wept all over them and said within myself, Oh that my head were not waters, nor mine eyes a fountain of tears! The tears seemed out of all proportion to the sins I felt sorry for, it seemed a waste of waters, a much greater sinner I fancied might be run with them.

May 20th, 1875.

To M. G.

I suppose thousands of tragedies such as we saw from our breakfast table are transpiring every moment in this "fallen" planet. We saw a cat spring from the walk into the grass and immediately a beautiful golden oriole fly up, but only about a foot, before the cat picked it up, right out of the air, and with her golden booty projecting in all directions from her mouth, marched proudly off, to breakfast on it. Sarah and Alice were for starting right off, to put a stop to such doings, unmindful of the Scripture "Your Heavenly Father feedeth them," and I presume they would have been just as ready to go if they had been breakfasting on bird-pie.

Have you seen Lowell's comparison of life to the clattering of a flock of sheep across a bridge and the silence which follows? "A confused clatter between two silences ending in dust."

December 10th, 1875.

To J. D.

I have just been listening to the ticking of our old clock, and thinking of my creeping under its ticking in a little one-story house in Seekonk. I must have left that house when I was very young, for I can remember but two things in my experience there. One of them is not pleasant to remember. The outlook and inlook of the family at that time, was anything but cheering. My father had been sick with consumption (the end of which was death), so long that the little property he had, dwindled to a frightfully small sum. Those were dark days for my mother and it was at the end of a hard day's work, that I refused, when asked to do for her some little service. The expression of her tired face, as she looked into mine, photographed itself upon my memory, in a way that is lasting. If I could only do that service now! But *the* time to do it was about sixty years ago.

Some of my experiences in that sleepy old Seekonk, over which the velvet footed hours crept so silently, might, I fancy be interesting to *you*, if I were a poet, and could do it properly. If I *were* a poet, merely to tell you of the shingle-shaving machine in the shade of an apple-tree, by the side of the road, which I passed on my way to and from school, might not convey much to you, but there is much in it to me. The clean look of the shingles, and oh! the smell of the cedar and the long summer days that brooded over it all.

I took a walk over Millstone hill this afternoon, and came home by the Hermitage. It is so much changed, you would hardly know the place. Those little maples, from which we once shook a crop of young owls, are all gone, and the trees are cut down about the Pond; so that it isn't a Hermitage any more.

That was a long time ago, and what a different world that, from this, in which I am living now. We exchange worlds many

times before we have a funeral which appears in the street. My acquaintance with you, marks a boundary line between two of my worlds; you taught me to walk and introduced me to nature, and I saw her through your eyes awhile. Then Emerson took possession of me, then Thoreau, and I have lived along the greater part of my life a sort of parasite of these men.

1876.

new

I got my first glimpse of spring just now on my way home. I saw it in the color of the sunlight, in the yellowish or topaz tinge it has, and heard it in the sighing of the breeze in the Misses Burnside's yard. It was a faint intimation, but the first intimations though faint are very inspiring to me, waking me up, as they do, to the fact that the old and forever interesting miracle of spring is to be performed again. They are the prelude to all that is to fol-

low—to the faint exultant note of the blue-bird, the roll of the toad and the sweet strain of the meadow lark, the jingling of the song-sparrow, etc. All the millions of birds and insects that go to make up even one of our poorest springs.

1876.

new

I wish you knew my friend R—, a rare man, all desirable kinds of a man ; can meet the highest on very high grounds ; carries guns of all sorts, from a columbiad to a pop-gun ; tells a story almost better than you do, and has an inexhaustible well of fun in him, springing up into everlasting life ; I have almost wished that my advent in life might have been more contemporary with him, or if I had been late enough to go to school to him instead of the teacher I had in Providence, who knows what a different Theo. Brown I might have been. It would be difficult to imagine any better course to

take to prevent a boy from getting an education than sending him to that school, or to hold him back from development, than sending him to Asa Allen's to nail boxes together and whistle ; but I can say the Attleboro life was well for the puny boy ; Mrs. Allen's boiled toast moistened with milk of an azure tint never tempted us to eat more than we needed.

1876.

new

The Almanac, the Bible, and the Universalist Trumpet, were about all the reading we had in those days in Attleboro. The Bible interested Mr. Allen, because he thought he found in it the doctrine of universal salvation. A Yankee farmer away off in North America, in the nineteenth century, bothering his brain about those old schemes of salvation or damnation ! feeling that they are binding on him ! There were the heavens filled with stars right over his

farm, this great rich nature filled with mysteries coming right up to his door-sill, inviting him to study her, and offering such rich rewards. But these things were of small account to him compared with the question of salvation or damnation. But Mr. Allen's salvation, what salvation he had, I suspect came in quite another way. It came through his industry, filling up bog-holes and making the place say corn and potatoes instead of frogs. I am not ignorant of the fact that the above hits me as hard as it does Asa Allen. I spent years over those doctrines, when I might have been learning something much more useful. And what bog-hole can I point to, that I have filled. But I like to hear frogs, and frogs want some bog-holes to live in.

1876.

new

Cole's voyage of life has been interesting to me; the two little children at the extreme prow are absorbed in things only,

but the girl a little farther back has evidently awakened to consciousness, and is in a reverie of thought (I don't know as one can be in a reverie of anything but thought); —Fate, the boatman, looks as though he could be depended upon to get them over, in season, rain or shine; it is useless to say in this connection, Providence permitting, we are sure of a passage over in that boat, if we haven't a cent, if not over, under. "If my bark sinks, 'tis to another sea," sounds well and may be true. But speculations on the destiny of that boat lead away from the picture. The old man has evidently the years bad, looks in fact curled up with them and is looking neither backward or forward, but down, so it matters not which way he faces.

Men Channing

1876.

new

We sailed up the Concord River with just enough wind to prevail over the current, which was strong of course against us.—

No, our first voyage was up the Assabet. I would like to give you just what Thoreau said, but that is difficult; his talk fits into the time and place, into these rivers, and it would lose by being brought away, as wild flowers do by being brought from their homes. We pulled into our boat a great tortoise weighing some thirty pounds. None of your wavering between spirit and matter for him, no reachings out after the infinite, but a good tough solid life of it. I guess the old fable, in which the world rests on him is founded on fact. He seems at the bottom of the heap, but who has ever heard him complain of the back-ache!

August 27th, 1876.

To E. B. L.

I saw a Night Blooming Cereus this evening. It resembles a water-lily, but is larger. The great quantity of fragrance it gives out enhances the impression it

makes. Then the long preparation there has been for this magnificent blooming and its time of doing it in the night,—that helps. The thing seems somehow self-conscious, realizes that it is a great night with it. The visitors stand hushed in its presence as they do in the presence of some great work of art, a great picture, or piece of sculpture. Think of those splendid flowers opening in the night in the wilds of Mexico, where there are no eyes to look at them, except those of lizards and snakes. On speaking of the number of pistils, some one remarked they must need them, living as they do among such savage neighbors. But what do the young shoots do, before they get old enough to carry their pistils? They probably pull up stakes,—no, roots and leaves, when they see danger; but how can that be when their leaves depend on their roots? But it occurs to me that they depend upon the branches. The thing has got so tangled, I shall have to give it up,—besides it is making light of a *Cereus* subject.

April 4th, 1876.

To J. D.

A raging snow-storm ; what wild work is going on at Scar Bridge to-night ! The progeny of that hawk we have seen there,—how do they manage, to-night ? and the blue-birds and robins, whose instincts have played them false, methinks the night may seem a trifle long to them, and how about their breakfasts to-morrow morning ? The earliest of them can hardly calculate on finding a worm. The crows will have a restless night of it. Think of roosting on the swaying branch of a tree on such a night as this. The snow falls perchance on the back of a hawk, sitting on one of said branches. What are his thoughts I wonder ? Does time ever hang heavy on his wings ? These creatures seem to have less time-killing inventions than we do. No church or school, no regular meal times, theirs being of the chance sort and I imagine stretched too far apart for comfort, and the waiting

for a squirrel or mole, of which one feels hardly sure of ever coming, or of catching, when he does come, must if too long protracted, be anything but pleasant. The wind roars and squeals and sighs and sobs and swishes against the window-panes, just as you would like to hear it. How it tears over the Paxton hills! It is easy to imagine these noises the dying groans of men and women struggling in Paxton and Oakham snow-drifts. If you were here we would have a night of it, and if 'twere any one *but* you I should entertain him by getting out one of your old letters,—that one with the right old English poetry,—beginning

“O'er mountains and moorlands
Through sleet and through snow,
The teamster fast hurries his way.”

1877.

Well, here we are, at the fag end of another year. The years are getting short,

in these latter days, but they are large. Just think, how much is packed in one of them ; merely the human experience of our little planet in a year, how considerable ! then the experience of all the inferior animals, no tiniest insect but has contributed its mite ; and the vegetable kingdom that must be reckoned in. The frail morning-glory, that I wore in my button-hole, which wilted on my way to the store, is really a part of the sum of things. The last sands of the old year will soon drop and Oh how silently ! no emphasis will be given to the last one ; this stream of time how quietly and unceasingly it flows !

December 26th, 1877.

To E. B. L.

I thank you for the present and the remembrance, and I am sorry you did not get one from me. I like to see presents made to the children, and perhaps it is as well to

set apart a day for doing it, though I am inclined to think they would enjoy them better, scattered along through the year. But a good deal of the giving going on between the older ones, is poor enough. It is so large a matter of debt and credit, that there is really very little *giving* about it. I saw a forest of Christmas trees, for one family, this year, and remembering the paucity of my presents, in my childhood, I almost pitied these children, for I can not imagine they can get anything like the nutriment out of such a *quantity* as can be got out of a few. I remember my brother walked from Providence to Seekonk, one Saturday night, bringing with him a little red and green chaise or wagon, done up in a bandanna pocket handkerchief, and undid the bundle by lamp-light. I was told it was mine. Great Heavens, what an experience, and what splendor! It was almost too dazzling to look at, and it was all mine!! I hope the children who are now-a-days surfeited with things do manage to digest a few

of them. Miss Lincoln is going to have a tree for poor children. That seems a good thing to do. Some of the children in Pine Meadow or elsewhere, who have only "an oyster shell and a dead kitten" by way of toys would enjoy the discarded playthings of these better-provided children; and if any of the latter class could be made to understand the thing, they would like to load down such a tree, and would find that giving left a better taste in the mouth than receiving.

1878.

Bertha grows more interesting every day, and she was as interesting as she *could* be, a long time ago. It is astonishing how charming these babies are! Nature knows how to fix that thing, so as to ensure their proper care. If our care for them was founded on duty, they might have a hard time of it; but they have their little hands full of our heartstrings and they drive us

with all ease. What a means of grace they are! what a rough set of humans or rather inhumans we should be without them!

1878.

I had a good walk with Blake yesterday, off on the Tatnuck road, home by Marshall Flagg's. The day was fine and so were the cigars we smoked on the sunny side of a stone-wall; the bars having been let down, it was rather cool for Harry's back, but we changed for another, where he had a little pine tree at his back, and the great warm sun at his front, and we had a good time there and were more than reconciled to the universe—hoped indeed that the thing would be kept up, and that we should not be dropped out. Of the first we did not feel much doubt, but of the latter we hardly see how the thing can be done, without bringing in the supernatural; the proofs of our own continuance do not seem

to grow stronger as we grow older ; it is all left very much in the dark, as you may have observed, enough to make it very interesting—a pretty deep sense of the mystery of our being here, and of there being any *here* to be in, came over us, and Harry said : “It is first-rate, and I wouldn’t have any less mystery, if I had had the making of things myself.”

April, 1878.

To E. B. L.

This is a drizzly, disagreeable morning, and the people in the streets have a cheap look, and remind one (and that’s me) of a passage in Shakespeare,

“How stale, flat and unprofitable are all the uses of this world.”

But the beauty of the way of putting the above sentence, is a sufficient answer to it. If not that, a thousand other sentences of his can be quoted, that make it seem

quite worth while to run a planet of this size. I suppose when the world looks poor to us, it is because *we are poor*. It takes the color of our spectacles. I heard a man apologizing the other day for not being ready to pay all his rent, saying he had a large family of children to support, and that he had to go five miles a day, to and from his work (wood chopping), earning three dollars a week. Now when we hear such things we think this is a hard world, but this man seemed in good spirits and I dare say he speaks well of the world and enjoys it much better than a large class of the rich, who hardly know how to pass away their time. Satisfaction with life is often found where we are least likely to look for it.

March 9th, 1878.

To E. B. L.

The other evening I went to see some pictures on exhibition, and was much pleased

with one called "Morning among the mountains." The kind of morning chosen by the artist is a rare one, and the moments in such a morning very transient. The sun has just risen and his golden beams gild everything in the foreground—especially a flock of sheep and a shepherdess, seated high on the rocks. It is one of the mornings such as Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote:—

"Many a glorious morning have I seen,
Flatter the mountain top with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green;
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy."

The picture seems to have been painted with great accuracy and is full of poetry, but the shepherdess is as little aware of the poetry as are the sheep. She is probably an average shepherdess, has a healthy ruddy face, and a good appetite, and has undoubtedly seen more pale streams gilded with heavenly alchemy than ever Shakespeare did, but if she thought it worth while to speak about them, I suspect she may have expressed herself differently. I haven't

said much to the purpose, about this picture, and I suppose that the artist himself felt that he had only *hinted* at that nameless something, that beauty only suggests.

September 27th, 1878.

To E. B. L.

I should like to tell you something about Bertha. If I could report her pretty ways, and the things she says, they wouldn't be much to you, as you are not acquainted with her. I wish I could picture her as I saw her the other day, with a "popo" (flower) held tightly in her little hand, and her jaunty hat on the side of her head, and her hair in just the right disorder on her forehead. It would be a weak way of putting it, to say she was "as pretty as a picture." When I find a picture as pretty as she was, I shall buy it, if I have to mortgage my house for it. When we think how few grandparents care anything about their

grandchildren, don't you think we are fortunate in having those that we can love and take interest in?

We have the news this morning of the death of Benjamin F. Thomas. Nearly all the men I knew in my youth seem to be dying, these days. Except that death is so contrary to all our *past* experience that we have any recollection of, it would seem as though we might die ourselves some day. I find that I am getting more interested in the past, and the probability is that bye-and-bye I shall go over bodily to the past and cut all connection with the present. But this thing I mean to keep a secret, so do not say anything about it.

October 5th, 1878.

To J. D.

Yes, my old friend, I have lately passed another of my birthdays. Sixty-seven years ago, the fifteenth of last month,

doubtless a little ripple of excitement may have been stirred in the sleepy old neighborhood of Rehoboth (now Seekonk) by the announcement that Mrs. Samuel Brown had another son. Very likely Uncle Peter, who lived opposite our house, may have shouted the news, from the field where he was at work, to some of his neighbor farmers as they passed by. I have got so far away from that fellow there, that it does not seem like egotism to talk about him ; but though I was there and right in the thick on't, I can't tell much about it now. The Uncle Peter referred to is still living and well enough to do considerable work. He must be much older than you. But we are getting along where we shall have to hunt up some *old* men, in order to pass for young ones ourselves.

Life is getting pretty full of reminiscences. Coming from Alice's last night, down Lincoln street, there was the avenue of pines, on what was Wm. Lincoln's land, leading to the Pond, which you must re-

member, reminding me of an evening with you, George L. Brown and wife, Sarah Flagg and her sister Elizabeth, Sam'l Lamb, with his guitar, and Fisher Flagg, with his flute—we look pretty handsome there in the distance. The Pond is now gone, moonlight, etc., etc. The moonlight in those days had a depth to it that is wanting now. We believed in the supernatural then—some of us—and were ready, and almost expecting to see wonders such as “Proteus rising from the sea,” or hear old “Triton blow his wreathéd horn;”—but science, evolution, and what not, have been sapping the poetry of nature, as some of us saw it. Since the discovery that the moon is a played-out old planet, and only useful as a reflector, its light seems thin and cheap. I can imagine how those old Pagans felt, when the infidels of their day attacked and finally swept the heavens clean of their old gods. How barren and poor they must have looked to them.

October 26th, 1878.

To A. B. M.

Time is plenty and business scarce, and there is no good reason why I shouldn't write to you. I have ample time to go into ——'s line of business, writing my life. It needs *righting*, but it hardly seems fair to write it all to you. Possibly you would prefer a little time in which to live your own, to giving it all to reading mine. But I don't mean to do the thing thoroughly, and you need not feel *obliged* to answer *one* of my letters. This matter of writing our thoughts should be very free. Let our quills be as

“free as the eagle's wing”
Whether of trivial news we write,
Or mount on mighty pens and sing.

How's that for *high*? Pretty bad I should say, for *metre*.

1878.

To A. B. M.

My eye just rests on a sentence in your letter (which lies by me), in which you say it is a pity "the morning-glory fades so soon." Now I suspect that transientness you lament, which we always associate with flowers, is a part of their beauty. If they were more permanent they would be less beautiful. A tinge of sadness goes often with the contemplation of beauty, I think. It goes, too, with the moonlight with me. I remember (were you of the party?) coming home from Long Pond on a certain moonlight evening years ago. The face of Elizabeth Guild I remember so well. She had a very beautiful complexion, and it has somehow got mixed with the moonlight in my memory pleasantly, though there is this tinge of sadness with it of which I speak. Where now is that fair face? It does not

seem possible that she can be living through all these hundreds of years, and yet we feel that we have hardly begun to be old yet ! The trees in that pasture where we picked berries that afternoon have grown up since that day. I walked there some months ago alone, in their shade, which seemed a deep one to me, and was very suggestive.

I walked yesterday with Harry. It was a gray day. We sat on the bank of Long Pond, and looked off on to the brown hills and into the brown woods, keeping the ground for the most part in our thoughts. A dead hawk lay in the water near by, which had probably been shot while sailing over the pond. Perhaps the sight of that broken winged hawk crippled our thoughts ; at any rate they did not soar. But we had a good time. The day had a good sober cheer to it, and was not lacking in splendors, probably, had we been up to seeing them.

January 3d, 1879.

To A. W.

I thought of you in the night, when awakened by the furious wind playing all manner of pranks with the fleece of the little lamb-like snow-storm, which came in looking so innocent yesterday morning, but went out a raging lion. It was two degrees below zero, this morning, and the wind still blowing—very different this from the blowing of the roses, where you are. You got off in the right time to escape all this snow, wind and cold. It might seem almost Providential, your going, if there were not so many here who did *not* get off. You are in Florida, a flowery land. Let us have a flowery note—inclose a flower or two, or a little alligator; I suppose Postmasters would demur at letting a full-grown one come through.

I was surprised in opening the Editor's Drawer of the last Harper's, to see the fol-

7 lowing rhyme of mine, for I didn't send it there :—

A pious old fellow in Lynn
Believed in original sin ;
He was full on 't, he said
From his heels to his head.
And his neighbors believed him in Lynn.

Curtis and I attend to the furniture of that magazine, you see—he to the Easy Chair and I to the Drawer !!

I have just got your earthquake letter. It is easy to see from your account of it that it is just as well to throw the reins over the neck of an earthquake and let it "gang its ain gait," as any way.

To H. G. O. B.

I have lately read a pamphlet comparing Transcendentalism with Pantheism and Materialism. If you have not read it, you may like to know how the world was made, and Nancy, too. She knows well enough

how butter is made ; she can stop her churning and learn with you how the world is made. According to Buddha and the Transcendentalists (so says the writer) the thing was done in this way. "The universe has got possession of what life of such existence as it has, through the disintegration of the aboriginal nothing by means of another subsequent nothing." Now I dare say you will make the same blunder I did, if you try and think it out yourselves. I said to myself, "Oh, I see how it is ; the two nothings rub together, and the rubbings produce fire, and fire according to some of the old philosophers is the foundation of everything." But this is not the way at all. Don't you see the fallacy of that theory? Don't you see that if the thing had been tried in that way it would have been a failure? The fire you see would have burnt up the little nothing there *wasn't*, and then there wouldn't have been anything, and then where would you be? Neither you nor your butter, Nancy, would ever have "come." I haven't time to

tell you how the thing *was* done now, or rather *wasn't*, for it is not,—it only *seems*. But I will tell you all about it when I see you. Meantime you can go right on with your farming and churning, just as though you were there, to farm and churn, which you are not. "The perception of visible things is a mistake."

To L. P. H.

We have been to the Pond to-day—Harry and I. The Rev. Mr. B. took his skates and so did his companion, and they skated from the causeway down the pond, stopping occasionally on the sunny sides of islands to rest. I mean to put a sprig of black alder in this letter for you, and if you will take the trouble to put it into water, it will not be entirely cheated out of its spring, and you may have it with it, in your parlor. You must put up with *remembering* the bird-singing that has been done in it, for I hardly

think they, the birds, will follow it even into *your* parlor. It grew on the south edge of Goat Island—a delightful place, I assure you, in this morning's sunlight.

We skated down by Davis's Cottage, into and through Half-moon Pond, and through some of the lily grounds or rather *waters*, but not where you have been—into Flint's Pond. We visited a muskrat's house, knocked—*not* at the *door*, for we could not find one, but on the sides, and shouted, but got no answer. I suppose a pair of them were there, without doubt. I wonder if the days are too long for them, shut up there in one little room with no books, the monotony of the day broken only, so far as we know, by going to some spring, where is an opening in the ice, if so be they can find one—or diving to the bottom for a clam, which they carry into their parlor, dining-room and bed-room, and eat there in the dark. A sentence of a few lines of the experience of one of these fellows I would give something to see, if I could read it. But Sarah

is getting restless on the lounge and would not approve of my keeping her up for any such business as this of writing about muskrats. I hope you will not be robbed of any needful sleep reading these muskrat lines, for I know too little of them to have anything to the purpose to say about them.

Lucretia
To L. P. Hale

You express a desire in a late note, to know something about my walk with Harry. I find a scrap of paper in my pocket, on which I began a letter to you, but failed to finish, thinking it was rather slow; I don't *now* think it a "two-forty" note, but on looking it over it recalls to my mind some of our walk, and I have a sort of respect for it, even for the last sentence or two, which seemed so sort of slow and heavy, like many books, that I read them aloud to Harry and

we had a hearty laugh over them. I will copy the document :—

SHELBURNE, *July 14th.*

We are on our walk, but this morning are lying by (as it is raining fast), snugly quartered in a private house with very nice people, very intelligent withal. One of the ladies is a school-mistress, spending her vacation at home. The other has a husband and baby, but does not seem to have so good a time as a woman with such possessions ought to have. She is quite young, and I fancy has found married life not precisely the kind of bliss she anticipated. She evidently almost despairs of having her dreams realized. We will hope she will get safely through these narrows of married life, in which some seem to get snagged and come out into wider and sunnier seas, with wide and restful prospects (you may supply a better word for that last).

We left home Saturday, taking the Barre stage-coach which overtook us some

four miles out and rode on the top, thinking it a high arrangement for awhile. It did not last good long. We soon waked up to the fact that we were only *passengers*, whereat we had a hearty laugh. From Barre we took to our feet in earnest and with gladness, and walked on to Dana, where we expected to pass the night, but failing to get lodgings, rode to Greenwich village with a man in a narrow buggy, who caried the mail and who was reeling drunk. The tr-r-r-onk of the bull-frogs through the night was the most interesting thing we found there, but the inhabitants prided themselves less upon that than upon the new saw-mill there.

Sunday morning we had a high walk of ten miles to Shutesbury, which is on a mountain. There we went to meeting, in the afternoon. I enjoyed the singing and felt while that was going on quite sober and loving towards the whole human family, in spite of the funny Shutesbury bonnets or hats and some of the funnier giggling faces under them. We then came on to Leverett,

over a succession of plateaus or intervals in which were beautiful farms, very attractive looking places in which to live. On Monday morning we passed through Sunderland, walking through fields of grain, with no fences, which made the roads seem private as though they must end at the next house. Such roads would soon grow monotonous, for being made of rich soil there are none of the flowers to be found which grow by common road-sides—nothing but pig-weeds, and such other uninteresting weeds as grow among grains. So much of the letter. Don't let this get into the *Atlantic* without consulting me!

If you would like to follow us on the map, along farther, you must strike the Deerfield river near Shelburne, but below, at a great bend you will see, and follow it up to Charlemont. But we saw many things which you will not find on the map.

The ancient work we found, and near which we bathed, is not on the map. Great and small pot-holes, and a beautiful arch

large enough for a man in a boat to go through. I have a pleasant remembrance of the flickering of the reflected sunlight up under the top of said arch and of the one harebell I found near our bathing place. Its fragile beauty contrasted strongly with the rugged majesty of the rocks among which it grew. The end of our journey in a north-westerly direction was Williamstown. You must find your way as well as you can now. I can hardly remember the order of the towns, and so will jump you about back and forth anyway for awhile. We went to Pittsfield twice because it was in our way. Went to Lebanon, the Holy of Holies of the Shakers. Worshipped, but did not shake with them. Went to the Hoosac tunnel and over the mountain, under which it is to go if it goes. It goes *now* half a mile. The entrance looks impressive when one thinks of the miles of solid rock and solid darkness and silence through which it is to go. I can't tell you much about the great pink orchids on the top of the mountain,

with the morning dew on them. It is wonderful there should be such a difference between finding flowers in such a place, and finding them in common places. All of which you know full as well as I, but if I waited to tell you things of which you are ignorant, when would you get a note from me? A locust has just been singing, "Heaven lies about us," somewhat later than "in our infancy" when the locust sings.

To J. D.

I have lately been thinking of John Angier, a colored man, who once lived and died here. He presents rather an inspiring figure back there in the sunlight of a certain morning, when he came up from the meadow, back of Dr. Heywood's house, with a long spear in one hand, and several muskrats in the other, and stood his spear up against the store and brought his muskrats in. John was a good deal of a character. He seemed

to stand nearer nature than the rest of us, and could talk of her in an interesting way. And what an exuberance of life and spirit there was in him; and what a wealth of energy! The hardest work was play to him. And he impressed one as one who had an eye for fine things, to which many men of culture seem blind. I find I am getting along where the things which transpired in my youth shine out with a lustre that time alone can give. The curly-haired, tawny, boisterous John Angier, in his youth slightly intoxicated with the elixir of life, in the summer sunlight of that far off morning, is worth more to me, I fancy, than many a work of art I can think of.

Our crocuses are not in flower yet. Of our snow nothing remains, save here and there "a tattered scarf, thrown over the northern shoulder of a hill." We have hardly had a morning such as that on which Nathan Hale said "If I were a crocus I would come up this morning." But the spring is worrying along slowly, hardly ven-

turing to peep from buds or birds yet. I must take a walk Sunday and see whether the alder has hung its tassels out yet. In spite of their wormy look, I like to see them. And there are a good many things that go with them—the note of the blue-bird and black-bird, the gurgling of water and the first muddy, guttural mutterings of frogs. I think they go with them ; do they not?

To J. D.

Just think of your old Boylston, in this pleasant sunlight, while the sparkle of the morning is on, with the song of the newly arrived bobolinks flooding the dandelion bespangled meadows. I saw the first bobolink last Sunday. Like other heroes, he doesn't come in till late in the play, and when he arrives there is not much else heard for awhile. I presume you have seen one on his first arrival from the south, breaking open in song, on the wing, some twenty rods from the spear of grass on which he

alights, bending it with his weight, and dropping down out of sight. Have you heard we are to have no cherry blossoms this spring? How are we to get along without them? Just think! Suppose one summer should come and go, and no flower bloom, or bird sing, hyla peep, or frog croak! Perhaps we should thus be taught better to appreciate these luxuries.

To J. D.

The Adventists are having a revival here, they say. I went to their chapel last evening. They have a new preacher, who reasons from the "abomination of desolation," instead of the Imperial decrees, as has been the fashion, which you can easily see leads to an entirely different result. I met one of the brethren a few days after, and asked him what he thought of the argument. He expressed some doubt about the possibility of setting up the "abomination of

desolation," but said "if that can be set up, so as to put the saints into the little horn, I don't ask anything else ; it is all clear enough to me." And he said it with an emphasis ; but the little "*if*," which he was forced to use, robbed the sentence of the terror with which it might have otherwise inspired me.

I saw he had very little faith in such a possibility, and so much hinges on that ! If that can't be done, the saints can't be put into the little horn, and we are all afloat, and the world may go on yet any length of time. I am sorry they have given up the apocalyptical beasts and lobsters, which we always used to see pictured on the charts, at their meetings. They were very interesting to me, especially that great stout fellow in a brass apron, in whose great toe 't was said we were a few years ago. I fear they have had to give him up. It seems strange, after getting us so near through they should fail. I think they will not accomplish much without a good reliable chart.

We tried our hands at making epitaphs at Chamberlin's the other evening. The name of Solomon Pease was suggested. I was so much absorbed in mine that I do not remember any of the others. So here it is :—

7 Under this sod, beneath these trees,
 Lieth the pod of Solomon Pease.

To L. P. H. *Le*

That little burst of enthusiasm about the day you poured on me in your note, was duly enjoyed. Your faithfulness over the few little things, such as are found in dooryards, will undoubtedly make you ruler over many. Bye-and-bye you shall spend these great days, in walking toward some celestial Holden and sit on celestial hill-tops on the way, and hear celestial bobolinks, song-sparrows, larks, etc. I hope they will be as good as these earthly ones. Of all the springs that ever sprung, was there ever

one like this? But with the cares of business, I feel as though the principal part of it was slipping through my fingers, as indeed what one has not, for the last fifty years! I saw my first bobolink last Sunday. He looked as if he had just arrived, and he broke open in the air and flooded with his song a little meadow beneath him. The roll of the toad is seldom mentioned in any descriptions of them. That road which you left running into a purple mist or sunset is a good one. I like that sort of ending for things. Except knowledge ends thus, it is as uninteresting as the multiplication table. The mist of ignorance sometimes comes so near, that it might be mistaken for a fog.

To L. P. H.

This is a charming summer afternoon. A locust is *Z-ing* and crickets are chirping, and we listen to them in the rests of one of Mendelssohn's songs without words which

Alice is playing. And this reminds me of certain other *notes* without words, which I occasionally receive, and one of which I have just been reading. Well, I think I got at what was in the mind of the person who *did* it and I enjoyed it, especially after a second rehearsal. But this seems mean after getting such a pleasant *thing* as this you have just *thought* to me, and if these things you pass off for notes were not so handsome I presume I should have kept silent. I must allow, however, that these things you make do resemble sentences, though you seldom use any *words* and never any *letters* to make them of. But I did not find a *great deal* of trouble, or rather I should say, I found a great deal of *pleasure*, in making out the toughest words in your note; you have the faculty of *word-painting*, if not word-writing, for I have from your description a vivid impression of the place you are in. I should like to try the mountains again and be lifted up with them. I think they are more inspiring than the sea.

To L. P. H.

I walked on a narrow string-piece, to-day, between two heavens,—one, as usual, above, the other below. You would like to know how I did that. Well, I walked on Long Pond. Many things can be done on and about that,—and it was nearly all water over the ice except a narrow strip on which I walked. The lower heavens looked just as real as those above. There was no earth, and I was alone between these two concaves, and it was a high walk and a very clean one. If I had slumped through, I should have gone straight down to heaven. But I did not slump and I kept my balance, and got safely on earth again.

I sat on Wigwam Hill awhile, in or near the spot where we had our picnic. The view down the pond was charming. The water on the ice made the reflections very beautiful. But awful work was going on in the “Sanctuary.” Many if not all the large trees are being cut down, and I

heard the crash of some of them while I was there.

Emerson read a letter to us, when he was here the other day, from some one out west, a stranger,—a very bright letter, but I can't tell much about it. One line I remember which pleased Emerson very much. Here it is :—

“Life is a flame, whose splendor hides its base.”

I asked Harry the other day, while walking, to make a line to go with it, which he did very successfully :—

“The spirit's light may gild the plainest face;
Life is a flame, whose splendor hides its base.”

To L. P. H.

Your letters of Nov'r 7th we received, and have read them only three times yet,—but with great pleasure. They are saturated with Oriental life. I felt the dark, mysterious Pagan spirit, in the bark and crowing of those heathen dogs and cats. I wish we could have a photograph of you, when call-

ing on the Princess, smoking. How like a charade it must have seemed to you. Possibly you may have contracted the habit of smoking and that we may smoke together when you get home.

I can imagine the surprise of the English family on seeing you taken into the royal gondola while they found such conveyance as they could. I fancy there is just enough of the "natural man" left in you to have enjoyed that, in a quiet way.

Where did you eat your Thanksgiving dinner? and did you have an Egyptian turkey? We had a great time at our family party last night. The boys got up a train of cars and a steamboat in great shape (the family cradle serving as a life-boat), which vehicles were made to convey the Brown family to the Paris Exposition, starting from Seekonk. Their voyage was full of incidents, both pleasurable and painful.

We ventured on Opera again, though you were absent, and got along very well, I thought. I hope to have the pleasure of

dying with you in Opera again ; dying sort of quietly, you know—not in a way to impair your health, like that death of yours on a similar occasion a year ago.

We are having a course of lectures in Brinley Hall, which Chamberlin and I are getting up ; they are giving great pleasure to those who hear them. Greek Mythology is the subject. John Weiss helps us. He wrote them and delivers them, and we do all the rest. They are delightful. I enjoy them very much, even when I have little idea of what is going on, which is a good part of the time. I enjoyed seeing Weiss at the Chamberlins' the other night, after the lecture. He told a funny incident of his boy days in Worcester. In company with some other boys, he was passing Mrs. Macarty's garden, in which were some tempting cherries. One of the boys said, "Let's get over the fence and hook some cherries !" But Weiss said he had the precaution to look through a knot-hole, into the garden, and saw some one walking there,

whereupon he said, "No, I shan't steal any cherries. I am going home." Soon after his arrival home, a basket of cherries arrived from Mrs. Macarty, for the good little boy who would not steal. Weiss said he swallowed the cherries and the praise with equal readiness. What an excellent Sunday school story with the knot-hole left out! How many Sunday school stories have been written with the knot-hole left out!

To L. P. H.

Those were "Heaven-sweet" days, as you say, and it was very pleasant to have you say so. Thursday was one of them, and we took that, Harry and I, for Dudley, starting in the early train and leaving it at Webster. The sun came leisurely and majestically up, while we were tearing along with such rattle and rumble and smoke. On going through one of the Oxfords I noticed girls standing in the belfry of a church—all golden they were with the just risen sun.

I fancied them Pagans and that they were there for worship, and that they had played with the fringe of the dawn and done many other fine things, until now they were bathed in the effulgence of day. And so I was inspired perhaps as much as they, though they were *in one* and I was not.

We breakfasted with the Russells, after which we went to Peter pond—a beautiful little retired pond; Peter the Hermit, we will call it. It has fine echoes. Our rough calls came back much more musical than they went. High on some rocks on the hill on the east side of the pond we sat and smoked and chatted, and Harry read one of Thoreau's letters and we had a good time generally. I ought to make mention of two hunters still higher than we, on a crag on the opposite side of the pond, occasionally firing their guns, the smoke of which we could see some time before hearing the report. They looked a long way off, and yet we could hear their talk, but not what they said, so it was interesting.

Mr. Alcott has been here—read a criticism of Emerson at our house last evening : and there was conversation before and after the reading, parts of which were as good, perhaps, as if we had sat down with the avowed object of conversing.

Are not these days delicious? The fact that they are looked on through the loving eyes of our friends enhances their value to us.

To J. D.

I took a long walk last Sunday. It was one of the days to walk in ; a high sounding day, with a great wind to it, and splendid sunlight ; white clouds freighted with light, hurrying across the beautiful blue sky, squirrels scampering, pines silvered with light tossing their cones, etc. You know all about it. The end to my walk was a visit to a little meadow in Auburn, which I once found sprinkled with the Grass of Parnassus, small flowers resembling but-

tercups, only less yellow. It was late in the autumn and I recollect wondering how they had withstood the vertical rays of summer and waited for the slanting beams of an October sun to pry open their pale petals. I found the meadow, but not the flowers. They had flowered, I presume, and got their seeds in the ground for another crop, next autumn. The time will come round soon—only eleven months! How fast we are going, my friend, so fast that we may get out of breath! Well, we have had a good time. I am glad I was invited and glad I came, and am glad *you* came, however much you have found of which to complain.

To E. B. L.

I sat awhile to-day in the edge of the woods opposite Bell Pond. The flashing and glitter of the bright morning sunlight on the water, and the shimmer of the same on the trees on the east side, with the

autumnal colors, made a handsome picture, set in an oval frame of blue sky, and the walk through the woods amid such gorgeous colors was interesting. The great silence of these autumn days is broken by little else than the music of insects, and that hardly displaces the silence. Think of the countless acres of golden-rods and asters, hanging their contemplative heads in these sunny days, their tops filled with bees and buzzers of all sorts. The colors are getting less brilliant every day, but there is nothing to complain of in the way of beauty now. The birds, with the exception of the crow, jay and chickadee, are silent, or were to-day. I saw but one butterfly, a yellow one, and he was faded and ragged, and looked as though he did not place a high estimate on the remainder of his earthly life. In spite of his having been used as the emblem of immortality the months have told on him, and in the course of a few weeks probably he will breathe his last, very likely on a thistle blossom. He will not, like the worm

from which he emerged, wrap the drapery of his couch about him and lie down to make a butterfly.

To E. B. L.

A spring morning like this, brings back vividly to my mind other spring mornings in Attleborough, some fifty years ago. Sometimes a whiff of that life comes back to me, in an odor; by the mere act of thought I can smell the pine boards laid over the fence to dry, in Mr. Allen's yard, and I can hear the pewee, and the ripe notes of the martins who built their nests under the eaves of the house—oh! how long those summer days were. Especially some of those in which I rode the horse to plough when the sun stood still in the heavens and would not go down—only one or two half-holidays in the year, and work in which I took no interest. It would be difficult for me to tell what I was interested in. I think I was a little

interested in the face of one of the girls at the school I attended (to how little purpose!) for that face still holds its place in my memory, though the name of its owner is forgotten, very cross eyes she had, but a sweet expression of countenance, beautiful flesh and blood and youth. Industry was Asa Allen's "strong holt," and he rounded his back by it. His minister called on him two or three times a year (he was a Universalist), and then he would take off his apron and take him into the house, and take out his gin bottle, and become quite animated in talking about the cause of Universalism. How some Orthodox had been worsted in an encounter with Hosea Ballou, the "great gun" of Universalism in that day. I can see Mrs. Allen as she sat listening to the argument they brought out to prove their belief, her kindly face beaming and running over with good feeling. She was as good as the day was long, but her cooking was inexpressive. Her toasts were moist enough, but the milk that moistened them had under-

gone an awful strain, and the tea and coffee drinking was purely a work of fiction.

To J. D.

Alice is playing a Sonata of Beethoven's. The first movement takes right hold of me. We have been listening to some of Wagner's music this winter, played by Thomas's orchestra, and made crazy by it, and almost ready to say, that everything in the past has been dwarfed by it, but while hearing this passage, from Beethoven, it seems to me that the effect of Wagner's music on me was cheap compared with this. Not long since we heard at a concert something of Mozart's which was new to me, and delighted me beyond measure. It opened with a little fragment of an air, which was so simple that one suspects the composer picked it up out of curiosity to see what *could* be done with such a little thing, but by repetition, it grows on him, and he gets in love with

it and the way he fondles it and wreathes his beautiful fancies round it, and then tosses it into other keys, and does the like, only differently with it there, is charming.

I was surprised in reading an old Harper's Magazine to stumble on a saying of mine, and I was glad to see it, for the recollection it brought me, of my feeling for Emerson in those days. My little joke is immortalized by being put in contrast with one of Emerson's, viz., his answer to a crazy Millerite, who had been telling him the world was coming to an end. "Let it come," said Emerson, "we can get along just as well without it." Now for mine, and after all this preparation, you will be surprised at the size of the mouse the mountain has produced. I was on my way in company with others to hear Emerson deliver a "Phi Beta" oration. Some anxiety was expressed about our getting there in season, I said, "If we *are* late, it is better to *miss* hearing Emerson, than to *hear* any one else."

To E. B. L.

I should like to write you about something new, about Bertha if I knew how to do it, and if you knew her as we do. For some months after landing on these shores, she exhibited a sweetness and a serenity of disposition rare for one of her months. She not merely "accepted the universe" but took hold of it gladly as being just what she wanted. No filmiest cloud of those she trailed in coming shaded her serene brow and it seemed as though she began with virtues with which some of us older ones fail to end. But she is beginning to show certain indications that those virtues may not wear as well as when they are arrived at through experience. She already gives indications that she prefers *her* way, to that of any one else, and if she don't have it, it will be through no fault of hers. But her worst ways are winning.

To H. G. O. B.

I have lately bought a cheap photograph, the original by Holman Hunt. This picture is a rare delight to me. The face of the youthful Jesus among the doctors, is very beautiful. His attitude and expression as he bends toward his mother, who anxiously leans forward to speak to him,—how much there is in that! His great wondering eyes and face full of genius. Among the old doctors sitting around is one kindly face, who looks as though he must love the young Nazarine and was disposed to hear what he had to say, but it seems unreasonable to suppose he is going to give up his way of thinking and all that Jewish ritual, to one who has so little *past* and appeals to none back of himself. But the face of Jesus is the picture.

JEFFERSON, N. H., *July 17th, 1877.*

To A. W.

If I could give you any idea of the grandeur and beauty of the view from this window, you would pack your trunks at once. You have lived long enough without seeing these mountains. They are "big things." But the size is only an item in the make up of a mountain. I foolishly said to Harry once, when he proposed going to one, "Why not *imagine* your mountains, and so have them as high as you like?" and perpetrated the following stanza :—

Packed in my mind my mountains lie,
And stop not with this pent-up sky ;
From them I can look down in scorn
On yonder petty Matterhorn.

But as magnitude is but one item, and imaginary magnitude so poor compared with that which is real, one sees that his imaginary one, though it were twice as high, will

not do at all, for there is all the marvellous variety and delicacy of coloring

“Dally on them laid,
By atmosphere, and sun and shade,”

too beautiful to be imagined or even to be remembered, so well as to prevent surprise at every fresh sight of them. We have the whole Presidential range (I hate the name!) in our front and side yard.

To J. D.

I came across a sentence lately, which the writer thought a fair summing up of the Pessimistic philosophy, “Life is a uselessly interrupting episode in the blissful repose of the non-existent.” With our somewhat limited or rather indistinct recollection of our non-existence, it is rather difficult to take sides decidedly in this matter. I fancy there are some who might feel disposed to accept the statement; for instance, a man with a large family of children

when he vainly seeks the work and wages necessary for their support. On the other hand, a young and healthy bobolink would hesitate about subscribing. He has somehow got it into his head that swinging on grass stems in pleasant meadows and singing among apple-blossoms is something short of the worst possible condition that could be imagined. Speaking of apple-blossoms,—we went into the country last week, and saw them at their best, and the lilacs also. I have a great affection for them. I associate them with the single red roses that grow in country door-yards. They are to me what the old almanacs are to you, though *their* leaves never get smoky.

I thank you for that stanza from the eighteen hundred and three almanac. I have seen that "uplifting of a vessel's icy prow," but when or where I do not remember. The *shaking* of the "tall mountain's frozen head" I suppose must be all right, because the other lines are so good.

I am sorry to hear they have built a new saw-mill joining the little Bannister's grist-mill. I did suppose *that* place was safe for our lifetime at least. Our baby Bertha may live to see the old saw-mill time-stained. I saw her riding in her wagon just now, with a sprig of lupine in one hand and a toy cat in the other. The world seems to be quite an interesting place to her, and she takes great satisfaction in shewing it up to us, and gets kissed pretty often while doing it.

To E. B. L.

I have received the letter in which you express a doubt about seeing Uncle Peter again. You must remember you have seen us *all* for the last time, a great many times, but that need not prevent your coming here in the spring, when we will go to Seekonk and see Uncle Peter, and the rocks where we used to make money, and the old button-

wood tree on which our swing was hung, for I think it is still standing. Do you remember the little forest where the sassafras grew? Stanley never saw anything wilder in his travels than that little bit of woods to my young eyes. Do you remember the cheese we hid in the wall? It competed successfully in the line of hardness with the stones. The cheese was given us, and as no teeth could masticate it, and no stomach undertake to digest it, its fittest use seemed the repairing of a stone wall. How many squirrels must have worn their teeth out, working upon it. The person who presented it to us, also gave us a mince-pie. She was present when it was brought to the table, and exclaimed, "Why, that is one of my *best* pies!" I think now a very youthful appetite would be necessary to enjoy even her *best* pies. I went to Seekonk the other day and had a pleasant chat with one of our old playmates, who informed me there was but two years difference in our ages, and suddenly her face became a mirror to me,

in which I saw with sufficient distinctness—
an old man. //

To A. B. M.

I send a late *Index* containing an article by S. H. Morse, entitled "Modern Religious Sentiment." I have read it several times with interest. What he says about our being more than one, came to me with force, in consequence of an experience I had a long time ago, My life was in great danger and I was tremendously frightened, that is, *one of us was*, but there was another person just above, who "lay stretched in smiling repose," a calm spectator looking down to see how the person below would behave in his trying position. This suggested to me in a lively way the probability that all the evidence is not yet in.

It would seem as if our days ought to be of consequence enough, so that, at night, we should *sort* over our experiences and find something worth saving and laying away. This sounds well, and if you were more of a stranger you might think I was doing something in that line myself. My mood to-day is retrospective, made so it seems to me by the tolling of the church bells, which my ears seem to *remember*, and all the past presses with about equal weight to be written; all of it seems good and it is pleasant to think of recalling any of it.

The music of the locust's song is worth much to me; as I listen to it there seems but the thinnest gauze between me and the best things in the universe. If I could only catch one of the world of fine things, it almost suggests to me!

We have lately had a series of concerts from the Boston Quintette Club, which we used to hear in our youth, mine, I mean, in the same place, Brinley Hall.—They suggested to me the comparison of life to a musical composition. We have now returned to the theme.

ENIGMA.

More subtle than sunlight am I,
The life of all action and thought—
Without me your best projects die,
With me *your worst may* be fraught.

Men invent many ways me to bind,
And exclusively make me their own;
And when feeling most sure me to find,
They're surprised to find I have flown.

The Shekinahs I build, I forsake
Contented in few long to stay;
Strange new ones 't is my business to make,—
At this game forever I play.

My realm is all nature and art,
In high and low places I dwell;
Of heaven I am the best part,
And also the worst part of hell.



Death of child 36

